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Sleep Sound

by [Viceter](#)

Summary

Pharah and Mercy have trouble sleeping. A series of chance encounters prove that the solution might be each other.

Chapter 1

Synopsis: *Pharah and Mercy have trouble sleeping. A series of chance encounters prove that the solution might be each other.*

Pairing: *Rocket Angel (Fareeha “Pharah” Amari/Angela “Mercy” Ziegler)*

Fareeha had nightmares. It wasn't unusual. Most of Overwatch did.

She remembered the frantic screams of her mother in the deepest night; Ana Amari thrashing in her bedsheets. On those nights, she would clamber into her mother's bed and shake her awake. Her mother would gasp, as though recovering from drowning, then hold Fareeha, squeezing tight enough to push the breath from her lungs. Even then, Fareeha never complained. She understood, somehow, that in these moments, Ana Amari needed her to be strong.

“My little soldier,” her mother would say, as Fareeha would reach up to touch the Eye of Horus tattooed on her left cheek, wondering at the profound sadness in eyes that mirrored her own.

Once, Fareeha had asked about her mother's nightmares. Ana had expected her daughter to ask why the dreams came; not what. Again, the child surprised her with her awareness; her innate understanding of what living her kind of life meant.

Fareeha would forever read the sorrow her mother regarded her with as a sign of disappointment. In reality, it was remorse.

Ana Amari had known, from the day Fareeha had taken her first steps, scrunching her round face and falling over, and over, and over again until she could stand, that she had given birth to a soldier. And, like every mother, and knowing better than perhaps any other what war brought, she feared for her child.

And so, when Fareeha asked what her nightmares were made of, Ana brushed the thick black hair from her daughter's face and said, *“May you never have to know, dear one.”*

It was a fool's wish. Fareeha now knew, all too well, what her mother's demons had been made of. She had her own. She entered the bathroom she shared with Zaryanova and Oxtan, grateful that neither was awake to witness the tremble in her hands, or the sheen of sweat that covered her body. She splashed frigid water on her face, staring at the dark circles beneath her eyes.

Sleep would be elusive tonight.

Fareeha rolled her shoulder as she returned to her room — in the past, Overwatch had been so full of recruits and agents that this particular base had several co-ed bunks. They were now so few that each of them could take a room and still leave some vacant. She opened the trunk at the base of her bed, where Oxtan, one dull day, had crossed out the previous owner's callsign with permanent marker and written in “Pharah.”

They had originally wanted to give Fareeha her mother's old quarters — private due to Ana Amari's rank and prestige — and her trunk, but she vehemently refused. She would earn her mother's legacy.

Fareeha slipped into an HSI tank top, revealing the intricate ink on her arms, and switched her ratty shorts out for sweats. She tugged on socks; whoever had designed the Watchpoints had apparently decided that steel floors were necessary for all common areas, and Fareeha,

accustomed to the heat, hated the sensation of cold metal beneath her feet.

She padded out to the common area, intending to fix a cup of tea and perhaps drift off afterward, while fervently hoping that neither Oxtan nor Reinhardt were awake. She was too drained to deal with either one's overtures of friendship, however good-spirited.

Fareeha opened the doors to the common area with a push of a button, then froze.

This... this might actually be worse.

"Fareeha?" The one member of Overwatch she studiously avoided thinking about, though it was an exercise in futility, sat on the couch facing the kitchen, cradling a mug of steaming tea between her hands.

Fareeha willed her jaw to work. She considered turning on her heel and going back to her quarters, but that would lead her to think that Fareeha disliked her, when the opposite was true.

"Doctor," she said, smoothing a hand over her dark hair and hoping that she didn't look like too much of a mess.

"Angela," Doctor Ziegler said, smiling softly, "unless you have an injury...?"

"No," Fareeha said, taking tentative steps into the common area and closer to the couch, "my apologies Docto — Angela."

This time, Angela's smile reached her brilliant blue eyes.

"Can't sleep either?" She said, and Fareeha unfroze herself enough to walk to the kitchen and begin boiling water.

"No."

"Occupational hazard, I suppose," Angela said, having followed into the kitchen, and leaning against the counter.

That made Fareeha's lips twitch.

"Among many."

Angela chuckled, and Fareeha's heart raced at the sound.

"Nightmares?" It was more statement than question.

"You too?"

"That, and I don't need much sleep these days," Angela said, Fareeha turning to face her.

She wasn't sure how she'd missed it earlier, but Angela's hair was down, and she looked —

Absolutely stunning.

Fareeha licked her lips, and noticed the doctor's eyes shoot downward momentarily. The water boiled; Fareeha fixed herself tea. She felt Angela's eyes on her back, and caught her staring when she turned around. Angela snapped her head away, tinge of pink in her cheeks.

"I hope you don't mind the company," Fareeha said, unsure what to make of Angela's attention... or embarrassment.

“No, of course not. You’re... you’re always good company, Fareeha.”

That sent a bloom of warmth into Fareeha’s chest, and she inclined her head in acknowledgment. She met Angela’s eyes; felt herself smiling.

“The feeling is mutual, Doctor Ziegler.” There was a hint of a tease there, and Angela didn’t miss it.

“If you insist on calling me by my title, then I’ll have to return the courtesy, Captain Amari.”

“Ah... that’s not necessary.”

Angela giggled, then brushed her fingertips against Fareeha’s bicep.

“Shall we?”

Angela retreated to her previous position while Fareeha stared after her with wide eyes, before remembering her tea and sitting on the other side of the couch.

“Care to share your troubles, Captain Amari?” Angela waved her teacup through the air, eyes resting on her companion’s face. “I have a PhD in Psychology, too, so I’m technically qualified.”

“Of course you do.” Angela, not expecting the jibe, was momentarily dazed, then recovered with a laugh. “You’re already my doctor; I’m not sure I could handle having you as my therapist, too.”

“And what’s that supposed to mean!”

Fareeha chuckled at the other woman’s affront.

“Only that you’d know too much.”

Mollified, Angela leaned back.

“And you? What’s on your mind... Angela?”

“Nothing. At the moment, I am content.” Angela reached across the small space between them and rested her hand, cool and surprisingly callused, on Fareeha’s. Fareeha’s breath caught in her throat. “You have a way of making people feel safe. I’m not immune to that effect.”

Fareeha stared at the hand on top of hers, then at Angela’s blue eyes, sincere under the white lights of the Watchpoint. She realized she hadn’t thought of her nightmares the moment she had walked into the common area and found Angela. She squeezed the doctor’s hand.

“Anytime, Angela. Anytime.”

Sleep Sound 2

Chapter Summary

Synopsis: Pharah and Mercy have trouble sleeping. A series of chance encounters prove that the solution might be each other.

Chapter Notes

Originally published on June 4, 2016 at
viceterships.tumblr.com/post/145394297729/sleep-sound-2

Check out my tumblr fic blog for more Pharmercy/Rocket Angel fics:
viceterships.tumblr.com

Synopsis: Pharah and Mercy have trouble sleeping. A series of chance encounters prove that the solution might be each other.

Pairing: Rocket Angel (Fareeha “Pharah” Amari/Angela “Mercy” Ziegler)

It had been a long, hard day for the newly reformed Overwatch. Given the international ban on Overwatch activity, they had rebranded as a mercenary company, answering the call when they could, and taking benevolent jobs to pay the bills the rest of the time.

Well, relatively benevolent, anyway.

The Vishkar Corporation of South Africa had contracted them to escort a payload of hard-light equipment through Jo’burg. They’d gotten the contract through Pharah’s reputation and on the recommendation of a previous client of HSI — one Satya Vaswani, who had apparently been impressed with Pharah’s performance. Though not leveled in the way Australia had been in the wake of the Omnic Crisis, South Africa, already notorious for crime, faced a surge of violence. Everyone who could get out of the country’s most dangerous cities, Johannesburg included, had, and everyone who couldn’t — well, if you weren’t a perpetrator of violence, then you became a victim of it.

Vishkar had won a small contract in Jo’burg, and were hoping to expand their hard-light projects to the rest of the strife-ridden country. Raids on the company’s equipment crippled the effort, and Vishkar was on the verge of abandoning the project until the region stabilized. Hiring their merry band of mercenaries was a last-ditch effort to revitalize the Corporation’s plans.

Though the mission had been successful, Pharah, at the vanguard, took several hits that necessitated a visit to the good doctor, once they’d collected their pay and gotten the hell out of dodge.

They made camp at a tiny Watchpoint in Madagascar, which was little more than two small bunk rooms, a laboratory-cum-medbay, and a communal kitchen and training space. Mei, naturally, had

been thrilled and holed up in the lab with Winston immediately. Apparently, Madagascar had been one of the core eco-Watchpoints from her era... or something. Pharah, exhausted, bruised, and battered, had been frog-marched by Mercy into the medbay for treatment. She fell into a deep, dreamless sleep after, abstaining from the general excitement that usually came with exploring a re-discovered Watchpoint.

Inconveniently, Fareeha did not wake up until the middle of the night. Zaryanova's foghorn-like snoring and the wash of blue light from Oxtan's choral accelerator, coupled with the sub-equatorial humidity that wasn't completely mitigated by the Watchpoint's architecture served as better alarms than her old drill sergeant's loudspeaker. She checked her watch. Seven hours had passed since Angela had walked her to her bunk. She tested her left side, where a point-blank .44 Magnum had ruptured the outer layers of her suit and left a bone bruise on her ribs. The flesh and muscle were tender, and the mottled purple-green-yellow coloration worse than it felt. She pressed her fingers to a few other spots injured during the escort, finding them in much the same near-healed state.

Once again, she had Angela Ziegler to thank for the swift recovery.

Fareeha fetched a change of clothes and washed the sweat off her body. She tugged on the red tank top and a pair of black French terry shorts, feeling remarkably well-rested. She hummed Egypt's "Bilady, Bilady, Bilady" even as she emerged into the common room.

It wasn't until Angela spoke that Fareeha realized she wasn't alone.

"My, if I had known you had such a charming voice, I would have asked you to sing me to sleep."

Fareeha straightened. She felt her ears heat, turning around slowly to face Angela. What she saw put a frown on her face. The doctor's ponytail had loosened, and stray wisps of blonde stuck out in odd angles; the dark bags beneath her eyes told of several nights with little or no sleep. Her eyelids drooped, her smile was tired, and her body slumped in the patchy armchair. Fareeha felt a sudden and almost overwhelming urge to pick the doctor up and put her to bed.

Her mouth thinned.

"...Angela."

Under Fareeha's intense scrutiny — when was Fareeha ever anything but intense — Angela wilted. She looked away.

"I know, I know. I look terrible."

And then Fareeha was crouched in front of her, a warm, worn hand engulfing hers before Angela realized she had moved.

"You never look terrible," Fareeha said, the sincerity in her voice melting away whatever resistance Angela considered mounting. "But you haven't been sleeping well."

Angela met those doe-brown eyes; the heavy eyelids; the familiar tattoo. She could feel the confidence and charisma that had radiated from Ana Amari — mentor, comrade, friend — embodied in a muted, subtle way in Fareeha. Comfort settled around her, like a loyal hound. Her eyelids drooped. She felt the fatigue of a week of disrupted sleep hit her all at once.

"How long, Angela?" She heard Fareeha's voice through a haze.

“Six days... or so,” she said; a small fib. She didn’t want Fareeha to worry.

“Right... Let me make you a cup of tea. Why don’t you move to the couch? It’s more comfortable.”

Somehow, Angela complied, all the while thinking that *Fareeha* would be most comfortable, but still conscious enough to know that voicing those traitorous thoughts was a bad idea. She blinked when, some minutes later, Fareeha returned with a half-eaten sandwich and two mugs (one chipped) of chamomile. Angela eyed the sandwich with a smirk and a raised eyebrow.

“Hungry?”

“Ravenous,” Fareeha answered, dropping the mugs and taking another bite. She did a good job of appearing perfectly at ease, though inside, nervousness like cellular sunbursts ricocheted through her stomach. “Your inventions have a way of stoking my appetite.”

Angela laughed, reaching for the chipped mug. Fareeha beat her to it. She didn’t protest, taking the intact mug and blowing on the hot liquid.

“So I’m told. You’re lucky Aleksandra, Reinhardt, and Hana left you anything.”

“For such a small girl, she eats like a demon. Though, I’m not sure I would call it luck. I doubt Zaryanova would leave a perfectly-made sandwich in the icebox with my name on it. Nor would I believe that she knows I enjoy pickles on just about anything.” Mischief danced through Fareeha’s eyes.

Angela hid her face with her hand.

“Caught! How did you know?”

“You did something similar for Oxton, some time ago. Except in her case, it was,” Fareeha’s free hand waved through the air, “those noodles she likes. She had just recovered from an altercation with the Widowmaker, as I recall.”

Angela smiled at the memory, then saddened at the thought of Amélie Lacroix. They fell silent. Fareeha finished her sandwich and rose to wash her hands in the kitchen before sinking into the couch beside Angela.

“Do you want to retire?” Fareeha asked softly.

“No,” Angela said. She was bone tired and ready to sleep for a year, but it was the truth. These stolen moments with Fareeha, few and far between, kept her buoyed.

“Okay. ...Is there anything I can do?”

“Sing for me?” Ana Amari’s voice, lilting and arcing over a campfire had been a joy to experience, those old golden days. After catching the brief bars of the Egyptian anthem in Fareeha’s low hum, Angela didn’t doubt that Ana’s daughter had inherited her mother’s vocal talents.

“Ah — “ Fareeha squirmed. Angela took pity.

“Perhaps another time?”

“I — perhaps.”

“Then, would you stay put for me?” Angela said, adjusting herself so that her legs hung over the edge of the couch. She shimmied so that she could rest her back and head against Fareeha. She emitted a small, pleased noise when Fareeha shifted and wrapped a tattooed, muscular arm around her.

“Is this better?” Fareeha asked, her voice hardly a whisper.

“Mmhmm.” Angela was already falling asleep.

“Sweet dreams, Angela,” Fareeha said.

You too, Fareeha, she wanted to respond, but had already fallen asleep.

Angela woke entirely too early, and entirely too unpleasantly — that is, with Lena Oxton’s voice in her ear and her breath on her face.

“We-ell love, aren’t you all cozy with Miss-Buff-and-Egyptian?” came the chipper whisper.

The grin on Lena’s face could swallow continents, that’s how wide it was. Angela wanted to reach for those goggles and snap them onto Lena’s face, but there was an arm around her, and she remembered that Fareeha was there — here — and the last thing she wanted was to have ‘Miss-Buff-and-Egyptian’ wake up to the trainwreck that was Lena Oxton.

“Lena!” Angela hissed, hoping that the steady whistle of Fareeha’s breath meant that she was still asleep. “Shoo!”

“Only if you promise to tell me everything later.”

“There’s nothing to tell! I fell asleep!”

“Oh, and Pharah just happened to be around to play pillow?”

“Lena! Please!”

The note of panic in Angela’s voice and the stirring of the Egyptian with an arm resting around her was apparently enough to scare Tracer off.

She zipped backwards, but not before saying, “You owe me one, Angie!”

Angela ignored the unwanted nickname, concerning herself instead with waking Fareeha before Aleksandra, or Hana, or god forbid, Reinhardt, could stumble upon them.

“Fareeha. Fareeha, I’m so sorry to wake you, but we should get up....” She shook the Captain gently, to which Fareeha responded, stirring.

She groaned, then seemed to realize her arm was around Angela, and stiffened.

“Doctor Ziegler, I apologize, I —”

“Please, Fareeha. I’m the one who should apologize.” Fareeha had removed her arm, and the deprivation struck Angela almost like a physical blow. She missed the other woman’s warmth already. “I fell asleep on you, after all.”

Fareeha passed a hand over her hair, smoothing down the stray strands.

“I...” Fareeha, still foggy with sleep, groped for words.

“I don’t think I’ve slept so well since...” The last time we stayed up together. “Well, a long time. Thank you, Fareeha.” Angela’s fingertips brushed against Fareeha’s jaw.

“I... I did say ‘anytime.’”

It was a good thing Angela was sitting down, otherwise the smile Fareeha gave her would have made her knees buckle.

Sleep Sound 3

Chapter Summary

Pharah and Mercy have trouble sleeping. A series of chance encounters prove that the solution might be each other.

Chapter Notes

Originally published on June 5, 2016 at
<http://viceterships.tumblr.com/post/145483322939/sleep-sound-3>

Please note that this is woefully out-of-canon because it was written and released prior to the Ana Amari drop. I have chosen not to retcon this chapter.

Check out my tumblr fic blog for more Pharmercy/Rocket Angel fics:
viceterships.tumblr.com

Synopsis: Pharah and Mercy have trouble sleeping. A series of chance encounters prove that the solution might be each other.

Pairing: Rocket Angel (Fareeha “Pharah” Amari/Angela “Mercy” Ziegler)

Gabriel Reyes, founder of Overwatch; leader of Blackwatch; and now Reaper — a man made of rage and hate, intent on wiping out the remainder of the organization he’d founded. He’d slipped through their fingers again, little more than smoke and a mask. Oxtan had clapped a hand to her shoulder and assured her that they’d kept him from taking what he wanted, but, but...

In her mind, there was Youssef Amari, her uncle, patting her head and saying:

“Reyes. He might’ve been your father, little warrior.”

Pharah slammed her fist down on the bedside table hard enough to make the lamp shake, throwing the covers from her body with enough force to send them to the floor.

Then, after uncle Youssef had passed to a rogue Talon missile falling into their neighborhood, Aunt Heba, stretching to rest a hand on her shoulder — Fareeha was taller than her cousins and most relatives — and murmuring:

“They say she died fighting them. Fighting the Reaper. Ana saved us again.”

Fareeha buried her face in her hands, wanting nothing more than to scream yet knowing that she would not be able to answer to the men and women whom she now called family. She thought of Reaper, laughing as he faded into the sky, promising that he would come for all of them; she remembered Mercy’s face, stricken, ashen as she watched him go....

She wished Uncle Youssef had never told her, had never speculated that Gabriel Reyes, the traitor

and murderer, might have been the man to sire her. She studied her creased hands, stained with the lives of human and omnic alike, and wondered if they weren't already the same.

She needed to move, she needed to go, she needed — she needed —

Fareeha found herself outside the Watchpoint medbay, her head inflamed and her body thrumming with pent-up energy. She paced for a while, then pressed her head against the cool metal of the door, sighing as it stymied the migraine building behind her eyes. Time and again, she raised her hand, intending to knock, or press the button that would open the doors and wake Mercy — Angela — *Mercy*, but then what would she say?

“Doctor, I realize it’s two in the morning, but I have a headache and can’t sleep. Can you fix me?”

Fareeha snorted. What a waste of Angela Ziegler’s time. Her rest was far too important to rouse her for something so mundane. She slumped against the door, forehead still pressed into the metal, recalling the way Angela’s hand felt beneath hers; the way her fingertips had trailed over her bare arm and sent electricity through every extremity; her smile; her voice; her shining eyes.

Angela slept poorly enough. Fareeha stood a moment more, then turned on her heel to return to her quarters.

The hiss of the medbay doors opening stopped her as certainly as Mei-Ling’s Endothermic Blaster.

“Fareeha? Are you okay?”

The urgency in Angela Ziegler’s voice tethered her, and Fareeha spun to face her.

“Yes.” A pause. “Don’t worry about me, Doctor Ziegler.”

Those blonde eyebrows creased, and Angela, in a spaghetti-strap top and short, very short, shorts, moved into Fareeha’s space. Her hands landed on Fareeha’s upper arms, and her touch stifled the pounding in Fareeha’s head, replacing it with a pounding in her chest.

“Are you having trouble sleeping?” Blue eyes sought hers, and she looked away.

“Yes.”

Angela’s hand came up to cup her cheek beneath her tattoo, tilting her head so that she was forced to look at the doctor’s concerned face.

“Come. Let me help you.” That hand brushed strands of brown-black hair from Fareeha’s face.

“You don’t have to.” Fareeha looked away again, scowling. “I don’t want to keep you up.”

Angela stepped closer. Close enough that Fareeha could smell her shampoo, and the faint smell of lavender on her skin.

“I want to.”

Those gentle hands trailed from Fareeha’s shoulders to her wrists, gripping them lightly.

“And I was awake already,” Angela said. “One of those nights.”

Fareeha’s fists clenched. Reaper’s mask flashed into her mind.

“I couldn’t catch him.” The undercurrent of fury was something Angela had never heard in Fareeha’s voice before, except when someone dared to threaten her life as she flitted across the battlefield to heal allies and innocents. “I couldn’t stop him, and now six men are dead!”

Angela pressed her body into Fareeha’s, wrapping her arms around the taller woman’s neck and holding her there until she felt the tension dissipate.

“I couldn’t stop him either.”

The alacrity with which Fareeha’s strong arms fastened around her and squeezed, as though she might slip through her fingers, startled Angela, and she gasped.

“I’m glad he didn’t touch you,” Fareeha said, voice husky. Angela shivered, not unpleasantly.

“Me too,” she said, smiling as she pulled away from the tight embrace and attempting to lighten the mood.

It didn’t work. The creases in Fareeha’s expression; the way she looked at Angela — she’d seen that look before, and it was that of a soldier imagining what would happen to their friends and loved ones if they ever failed. She wanted to alleviate that burden for this strong, beautiful woman, even if only for minutes.

“Fareeha, let me take care of you.” Angela tugged at Fareeha’s wrists, succeeding in pulling her into the medbay and shutting the doors. She grasped one of Fareeha’s hands in hers, trying her best not to think of how good, how *right*, it felt to be close to this woman, and pulled her into the adjoining quarters that served as her room. Fareeha stopped just past the doorway as it slid shut, shifting her weight from foot to foot. “Come here.”

She obeyed, standing in front of Angela.

So stubborn, Angela wanted to say, as she forced Fareeha to sit on the cot she called her bed, but refrained. It was enough to have her here.

“I think,” Angela started, “that it might have been my work that made him what he is now.”

They sat shoulder-to-shoulder, so Fareeha couldn’t see her face.

“I’m afraid that it destroyed the Gabriel I used to know.”

Fareeha stayed silent, rolling her next words in her mouth until she felt that she could say them the way they were meant to be said.

“From what I have heard, Gabriel Reyes was not the kind of man who would let anything or anyone determine his destiny for him.”

Angela turned her head, meeting Fareeha’s eyes.

“No... I suppose... I suppose you’re right.” Angela bowed her head. “I just wish I could bring him back, and ask him why he’s doing all of this.”

“I’d like to know the answer to that, too.”

Angela noticed Fareeha’s hands digging into her thighs.

“Did Ana tell you about him?”

“No.” She gritted her teeth. “She never said a thing. My family — they said he might have been

my father. And yet... and yet, he's the one who — !”

Fareeha's fists trembled. Angela covered them with her own hands. Her thumbs made small circles against the backs of Fareeha's hands.

“If he were, would it bother you?”

“I don't want to become like him!” Fareeha spat. “I don't need another shadow.”

Angela pressed her forehead to Fareeha's bare arm. She felt the cords of muscle relax and the fists beneath hers stop shaking.

“Fareeha, *Schatz*, when I look at you, I don't see your mother, or whomever your father might have been. I see only you.”

Angela's lips ghosted against her skin. Fareeha looked as though she'd been struck.

“Angela...”

Fareeha, torn, conflicted, so uncertain — Angela couldn't help herself. She straightened and pulled Fareeha's head into her lap. The woman moved like a rusty Bastion unit. Angela won out eventually. She indulged herself and trailed her fingers through soft, dark hair.

Fareeha felt the pressure behind her eyes beginning to lessen. Her eyes drooped.

“Angela, I —”

“Shh, sleep. You need it.”

“But you —”

“Doctor's orders.”

The silence stretched between them, and Angela began to hum a low, nonsensical tune. She shifted to make herself comfortable, continuing to stroke Fareeha's hair. The woman in her lap yawned, and Angela felt her body overflow with affection. Surely Fareeha felt the effect she had. She had to know.

“Thank you, Angela,” Fareeha said drowsily.

Moments later, Angela heard the rumble of Fareeha's soft snoring, likely the result of a broken nose — she'd check that later -- and let it send her to sleep.

Sleep Sound 4

Chapter Summary

Pharah and Mercy have trouble sleeping. A series of chance encounters prove that the solution might be each other.

Chapter Notes

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viceterships.tumblr.com

Synopsis: Pharah and Mercy have trouble sleeping. A series of chance encounters prove that the solution might be each other.

Pairing: Rocket Angel (Fareeha “Pharah” Amari/Angela “Mercy” Ziegler)

It was too cold. Even with a fleece blanket and a duvet layered on top of her, Angela shivered. They’d arrived at Watchpoint: Yakutsk four days ago for a myriad of reasons. Mei wanted to retrieve some eco-Watch data that lay in the dormant servers of the Watchpoint; Torbjorn wanted to pick up diamonds in Yakutsk for a new invention; and Aleksandra wanted to help the people who were fighting through a wave of omnic attacks. The combination of the cold and protracted skirmishes with omnics kept Angela Ziegler up at night — first to treat the sick and the injured of the city, and then because this felt too much like war again.

Though her medically altered body could function without rest for several days, she was still human. Usually, she could steal a quiet hour here or there, but since they’d arrived, she’d only slept a total of five hours. Her thoughts stumbled over each other; she slurred when she spoke. She’d be useless in the field and worse in the clinic if she couldn’t find a way to sleep soon.

She didn’t want to move beneath the covers, knowing that the rest of the bed would be frigid. Normally, she didn’t mind the cold, but this was different. This was bone-numbing.

She couldn’t take sleeping pills because her body metabolized them too quickly, and drinking until she passed out would not provide the recuperation her body and mind needed.

There was another solution, but...

No, Angela. It’s past midnight. She fought all day. And besides, you can’t treat her like a human teddy bear! She might get the wrong idea....

But I want her to get the wrong idea! She’s so...

Strong. Kind. Reliable. Drop-dead gorgeous.

Angela groaned, pulling the blankets over her head and debating whether or not screaming beneath her sheets was acceptable for a grown woman of thirty-seven. And then, because she was severely sleep deprived and could no longer suppress her subconscious mind, wondered how warm Fareeha would be right now, and if she'd let Angela trace her tattoos with her mouth....

“Gottverdammt!” Angela said to her ceiling. This was not good. This was very bad. She'd run straight into a chair while staring at Fareeha's backside today, and would've split her lip had McCree not been around to steady her. Lena had wagged her eyebrows at her — they hadn't found the time to have their “discussion” yet, and if Angela had her way, they never would. She holed up in the medbay after that, working on an article on the use of nanotechnology for the treatment of autoimmune disorders and ignoring the rest of the world.

If she were being honest with herself, she already knew the solution to most of her problems. It was lying, probably sound asleep, down the hallway and to the right, heedless of the thoughts Angela entertained when no one could witness the blush on her cheeks, or the sudden heat of her skin.

She tried to sleep again, willing her brain to shut up and shut off. As expected, the effort was futile. Angela Ziegler rolled out of her bed with all the grace of a land-bound walrus, slid into a pair of faux fur-lined slippers and set off down the hallway.

Halfway there, she berated herself for not grabbing her overcoat — it had to be below freezing in the corridor — but forged on. If Aleks could wear a tanktop and shorts to cook dinner in the common room, then she could walk to Fareeha's room without a jacket. She reached the door far too quickly. A sudden shudder of doubt wrenched at her stomach.

What was she thinking? What did she expect to come of this?

But, well, Fareeha had said ‘anytime,’ and more than once.

Before she could think herself into paralysis, she knocked on the door, hard. She winced at the noise, and prayed that no one else would wake up.

Angela didn't have to wait long.

A droopy-eyed Fareeha, rubbing the sleep from her eyes with her fists opened the door.

“Whu — ?” The word came out hoarse, garbled, and almost unintelligible.

“Hi, Fareeha.” Angela bit her lip. The image of this soldier standing in her doorway in a turtleneck, thick woolen pants, and thermal socks, half-asleep and thoroughly disheveled, was just too adorable. “There's no emergency, so please don't worry. I just... I couldn't sleep. Can't sleep. Haven't slept.” Angela was rambling now.

Fareeha blinked at her a few times, clearly exhausted.

“It's just that, whenever you're around, I seem to sleep better... sleep at all, really. And I - I don't know what I expected, I'm so sorry. You've had such a trying day, and here I am waking you up in the middle of the night! I'm so terribly sorry, Fareeha, I'll be going now. And we can maybe just forget about this?”

Fareeha's eyebrows were drawn together, in annoyance, or perhaps anger — consternation? She stepped towards Angela. She wrapped one arm around her back, then bent her knees and swept the other arm into the back of Angela's knees with a low grunt.

Angela found herself suddenly horizontal, but not on the floor as she'd expected. She flailed, earning another, grumpier grunt from Fareeha when she accidentally smacked the side of her face with her arm. Fareeha bounced her once, easy as she might a toddler, pulling her closer. Angela's arms wrapped instinctively around Fareeha's neck.

Oh, she was so warm.

Fareeha kicked the door shut behind them. Her bottom lip jutted out in a tiny pout, and she yawned mightily as she walked them both to the cot. At least four thick duvets lay on the floor in a heap. Fareeha dumped Angela into the bed, which was still warm from her body heat, took hold of the covers, and began to climb in beside Angela. Fareeha nudged her with her shoulder and a grumble. Angela, taking the hint, shifted so there was more room, her back to the other woman.

She wasn't exactly sure what she was doing or what was happening, only that Fareeha had just picked her up (like she weighed less than a feather), dumped her in her bed, and was now... lying beside her?!

This is a dream. I've fallen asleep and I'm dreaming. Good. I haven't actually embarrassed myself.

And then Fareeha pressed her warm, hard body against Angela's back, tucked her head under her chin, and slung an arm around her waist.

Angela's brain promptly shut off. She could smell faint traces of gunpowder and jet fuel beneath the clean, crisp scent of Fareeha's soap and shampoo. She felt the weight of Fareeha's arm over her, and the solid musculature of her body against her, breasts pushed into her back. She heard the faint whistle-snore that had been the result of the twice-broken nose she had finally examined weeks ago.

And for the first time since they had stepped foot in Siberia, Angela felt warm.

She settled into the lone pillow; began to count the inhale-whistle, exhale-rumble of Fareeha's breathing. She didn't get far.

Angela Ziegler woke up cold. She scrunched her nose. Of course it was cold. She'd been dreaming — there was no way Fareeha would actually — she heard the door click shut softly. Her eyes shot open. She sat up.

Fareeha stood, pulling on a sweater.

"You're awake," she said, turning around. "Look, I'm sorry about last night. I wasn't thinking, and I... overstepped." She bowed her head so her hair covered her face. "I don't think I was really awake. Forgive me, Doctor Ziegler." She held her hands as fists against her thighs; her shoulders raised and tensed. Everything about her was stiff, and Angela could only imagine the litany of faults Fareeha was reciting internally.

She slid out from under the covers, sorry to lose their warmth. She walked the few steps from the cot to Fareeha, and engulfed her in a tight embrace.

"And here I was, just about to thank you."

Fareeha lifted her head, and Angela cupped her cheek with one hand. The other lay around Fareeha's waist.

"I haven't been so well-rested since we arrived. I was starting to go a little crazy. It seems that

you're the best cure for sleepless nights."

"I... you..."

"Thank you, Fareeha," Angela said again, beaming. This time, Fareeha could meet her eyes.

"I... I did say anytime," she said, echoing the words she'd said before.

Angela breathed deep, and leapt.

"I think I will be taking advantage of that offer more often, if you don't mind."

Fareeha's eyes widened, and her lips settled into something close to a smile.

"Not at all."

Angela was dangerously close to letting herself drown in those deep brown eyes for the rest of her life. Her eyes twinkled.

"Do you always do that to people who wake you up in the middle of the night? Pick them up and tuck them in?"

Fareeha groaned.

"No! It's the cold. And the fighting. I have a hard time waking up, and don't operate properly for a while."

Angela laughed.

"Oh, I noticed. You weren't exactly verbose. Communicated mostly in grunts, actually," she said, and Fareeha turned her head, embarrassed. "Though," Angela tapped her lip and pretended to contemplate something, "if it means you pick me up and carry me, I think I can manage."

Fareeha snorted; chuckled.

"All you had to do was ask, you know."

Angela giggled, glad to see Fareeha's mood lightened.

"If you keep making such generous offers, you'll spoil me."

The way Fareeha looked at her in that moment, so open and full of fondness and affection — she wondered what Fareeha would look like, taken by a different kind of affection.

Angela felt herself going hot.

Oh dear. Jack was going to kill her.

Sleep Sound 5

Chapter Summary

Pharah and Mercy have trouble sleeping. A series of chance encounters prove that the solution might be each other.

Chapter Notes

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<http://viceterships.tumblr.com/post/146352954029/sleep-sound-5>

ALSO: Check out superrisu's amazing fanart for this chapter and Chapter 3:

Chapter 5: <http://superrisu.tumblr.com/post/146356141812/sleep-sound-5>

Chapter 3: <http://superrisu.tumblr.com/post/145674597157/sleep-sound-3>

Synopsis: *Pharah and Mercy have trouble sleeping. A series of chance encounters prove that the solution might be each other.*

Pairing: *Rocket Angel (Fareeha “Pharah” Amari/Angela “Mercy” Ziegler)*

So began a clandestine arrangement. Whenever one or the other had trouble sleeping, or woke in the middle of the night, plagued by nightmares, the other had a standing open-door policy.

Neither had ever been so well-rested in their adult lives.

Some nights, even the presence of the other couldn't prevent the nightmares or insomnia, but the comfort -- the sense of safety the other provided — what else could they ask for?

Fareeha plucked the glasses from Angela's face, folding them and placing them within arm's reach on the bedside table. She had fallen asleep reading a book while Fareeha disassembled, maintained, and polished the twin Beretta 92s she kept as sidearms. Old-fashioned, perhaps, but they hadn't failed her yet. With finesse, she was able to lift Angela from the armchair she'd dozed off in without waking the doctor. She laid her gently in the bed, earning a flutter of eyelashes and a mumble.

“Shh, ya amar. Sleep.”

Angela's hand reached out, gripping at Fareeha's shirt. She chuckled, climbing in beside her. Angela made a contented murmur, nuzzling into Fareeha. Her hands balled against Fareeha's collarbone, and soon she was fast asleep again.

Fareeha, full of restless energy thanks to the lack of work in the past week, couldn't sleep. She turned off the lights, and examined her companion by the moonlight streaming in from the

window. Her hand hovered over the side of Angela's face, her thumb landing on the blonde hair above her ear. She stroked the fine, soft strands, wondering, not for the first time, at how Angela could bear to sleep with her hair pulled back into a ponytail all the time. The moonlight illuminated the high crest of a cheekbone, conforming to the curve of a pointed nose and the jut of a stubborn chin. Fareeha spent more time than she should have studying the different shades of pink that comprised Angela's slightly parted lips. The urge to kiss her drummed across Fareeha's skin, insistent, spurred on by the low hum of fire that always came with spells of peace, and which made the thin hair on her arms stand on end.

She felt that fire concentrate at the base of her stomach when Angela shifted, baring the elegant curve of her neck, and the web of blue lines beneath the pale skin of her chest. Fareeha pulled away, attempting to recenter herself in the sudden coolness of the air, and the space between them.

Like a beacon, Angela called to her.

She studied Angela's sleeping face, surprised to find a tiny crease at the corner of her left eye. Mei said that Angela had hardly aged from when they had known each other ten years ago, and Fareeha was willing to attribute it to the modifications Angela had made to her body. This minute evidence of the doctor's humanity sent her stomach somersaulting. It was a feeling she was rapidly becoming accustomed to. Angela's presence had a way of upending the calm of her inner world. To see her like this, peaceful, trusting, and vulnerable — Fareeha considered it a gift and an honor.

She couldn't, wouldn't allow herself to think anything beyond that.

Angela's mouth fell further open.

These moments... Fareeha never wanted them to end.

But they would. And that thought drove her away from Angela's warmth and to the Watchpoint gym.

It was almost midnight, but Zaryanova was there too, squatting in the power rack in front of the mirror. She nodded to Fareeha once, in acknowledgment, and Fareeha raised a hand in return. Fareeha stacked her plates onto the bench press bar, locking them in place. She finished the first set with relative ease, exhaling on the push; inhaling on the descent. She jumped, startled when Zaryanova stepped behind the bench and leaned over, staring straight at her face.

"You are troubled. Best solution — break PRs. I will spot you."

Well, Fareeha couldn't argue with that. Though Zaryanova's personal record was more than double, closer to triple her own, Fareeha's bench wasn't anything to sneeze at. Fareeha stacked plates up to 185lbs onto the bar, and accepted the lifting gloves Zaryanova fetched from the equipment cabinet. She would have preferred her own, but had left them in her room along with the source of her current frustration. Still better than tearing her hands raw.

The first set had her begin to sweat. She stacked on another pair of ten pound plates, to match her current PR. She pressed through the set with more difficulty, but didn't require Zaryanova's assistance.

"Very good. More?"

Fareeha grunted.

"10," she said. Zaryanova examined her face.

“15.”

“15 then,” Fareeha acquiesced.

The first three reps, she managed in a measured, disciplined manner. The fourth had her arms trembling. On the fifth and final rep, Zaryanova assisted midway through Fareeha’s extension.

“Well done. One rep maximum? Another 20 pounds?”

Fareeha snorted.

“Are you trying to kill me?”

“I believe you can do it,” came the heavy accent.

Fareeha took a deep breath and exhaled through her mouth.

“Okay. Do it.”

Zaryanova grinned, and added the weight.

Fareeha let four minutes pass before planting her feet firmly and gripping the bar. She exhaled, lifting the bar off the rest. She brought the 240lbs down to her chest in a controlled motion, thought of Angela, gritted her teeth, and pressed up.

Zaryanova chortled, helping her rack the bar. Fareeha sat up.

“220 five rep max, and 240 one rep maximum. New record, Amari.”

Fareeha couldn’t keep the grin off her face. It did feel good. Zaryanova returned to the mirrors for deadlifts, and Fareeha completed the remainder of her intended workout. As she was about to leave, covered in sweat and tired enough that thoughts of Angela didn’t result in the swell of ecstasy and panic that usually accompanied them, Zaryanova tossed her a recovery shake.

“Amari,” she called out, “She likes you. Don’t be stupid. We spar tomorrow, after lunch.”

Fareeha shook her head. She should have been upset, but if she were being honest, next to Angela, Aleksandra Zaryanova was the closest friend she had.

“Tomorrow, Zaryanova.”

She returned to her quarters after showering, relieved to find Angela still asleep. She slipped into bed beside her, and wrapped an arm around her waist.

Zaryanova might be onto something.

Once, Fareeha, in a particularly playful mood, found Angela hunched over her desk, squinting at her computer and muttering angrily in German. She checked the clock. Angela had been at this since 0400. It was now 1900, she’d skipped breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and seemed to be hitting a wall, if the exclamation of “gottverdamm!” was any indication. Fareeha stepped behind her. Normally, Angela would turn with a smile and a cheerful greeting, but the doctor was in a rare mood today and didn’t notice Fareeha’s approach.

With fast hands, Fareeha nicked the glasses off of Angela’s face and took several steps backwards.

“Fareeha!” Angela shouted, whipping around in her chair and glaring. “Give those back! I’m in the middle of something!”

Fareeha so rarely found herself on the receiving end of Angela’s ire that weathering her glare was a unique experience.

“You’ll have to come get them.”

“Fareeha! This is important!”

She raised an eyebrow, still smirking.

Huffing, Angela stood from her chair, nearly stumbling in her heels thanks to the numbness in her legs and rear. Fareeha only just managed to smother her snicker. Angela approached her, scowling, and held out an open hand.

“There. I stood up. Now give me my glasses.”

“Not quite. You still have to get them.” Grinning widely, Fareeha held her arm, and the doctor’s glasses, straight up. Angela’s jaw dropped.

“Fareeha, if you don’t give me those right now…”

The Egyptian wasn’t budging.

“Ugh!” In a most undignified manner, Doctor Angela Ziegler hopped up, reaching for her glasses. It was no use. Even with heels, Fareeha had too much height on her. She jumped several more times, her face scrunched into pure exasperation. One particularly desperate attempt had her stumble and nearly twist her ankle, but Fareeha caught her with one arm, and gathered her to her chest. “You are so exasperating!” She muttered into Fareeha’s collarbone.

“Angela, Schatz,” she said, emphasizing the word Angela always used on her, “you need to eat.” The combination of Fareeha’s proximity, the husk of her voice, and the term of endearment sent Angela reeling. She sagged against Fareeha with a resigned sigh. “And then, I will give these back and leave you alone for another 12 hours, if you wish.”

Sullen silence.

“And you can be as angry with me as you like.”

“Hmph.” Angela’s chin now rested on Fareeha’s shoulder. Her arms, possessed by a mind of their own, settled around Fareeha’s waist.

“Will you eat?”

“Ja, fine.” Fareeha released her, and put Angela’s glasses on top of her own dark hair. She looked adorable. Angela wondered what she would look like with them properly on. “I’m still upset with you,” Angela said, more for her sake than Fareeha’s.

In that beautiful, stoic, exasperating way, Fareeha inclined her head, in acceptance of Angela’s declaration. She was still smirking, when, before they left the privacy of Angela’s quarters, Angela laced her fingers through Fareeha’s and gave them a quick squeeze before walking down the hallway together.

Later, after dinner and a far more productive couple of hours working on her research, Angela noticed the distinct lack of Amari in her quarters. Brow furrowed, she set off in search of the

woman. She didn't find her in any of the common areas, and successfully evaded inquiries from Torbjörn, the lone soul she encountered.

She went to Fareeha's room, rapping lightly on the door. When no one answered, she opened the door to find the lights on, and Fareeha passed out and snoring, face down on her mattress without covers on. Angela smiled at the sight. A treasure indeed. She leaned over, pressing her lips to Fareeha's temple before noticing a large bruise on her cheek. That was new. She ran her fingers over the purpling skin. Fareeha's hand shot out to grab her wrist. Her head lifted, and bleary brown eyes greeted Angela.

"Hn." Fareeha dropped her hand and let her head sink back down.

"What happened Fareeha, Schatz?"

"Teaching Hana self-defense. Lucky shot. Good roundhouse." There was a note of pride in Fareeha's voice. Her eyes were still closed. Angela knew by now that Fareeha, when especially tired, did not wake easily.

"Why didn't you come see me?"

Brown eyes opened.

"You were doing something important," Fareeha said. "Are you still upset with me?"

Angela melted. She brushed Fareeha's hair away from her face, taking care not to touch the livid bruise.

"Of course not. I'm grateful. I was getting nowhere, and desperately needed the break."

"Good," she said, smiling.

"Let me take care of that," Angela said.

"It's just a bruise."

"A bad one."

"I've had worse."

"Fareeha Amari."

"Angela Ziegler," Fareeha responded, with a lopsided grin. Angela was glad to see that her playful mood hadn't entirely dissipated. She liked this side of Fareeha; it was rare to see her this way. She shook her head and smiled. Fareeha was a slug when she didn't want to get up.

"Fine, I'll treat you in the morning." She made to rise, but Fareeha's hand shot out again, grabbing her wrist.

"Stay," Fareeha said.

"I need clothes from my room."

"Use mine."

Well, with that offer, how could she resist?

Angela got up quickly so Fareeha didn't see the tinge of pink on her cheeks. She selected a pair of

shorts and a faded shirt that looked so comfortable she'd wanted to try it on for months. It did not disappoint.

When she returned, Fareeha had settled beneath the covers and made space for Angela on the bed. She turned the lights off and set an alarm early enough that no one would be awake.

With one arm wrapped around her, Fareeha mumbled, "My favorite shirt."

Angela giggled.

"It's very comfortable. I'm contemplating stealing it."

Fareeha grumbled.

"Good night, Schatz. Sleep well."

"You too, Angela."

Angela did indeed, wake up at 0500 to sneak back to her room, retrieving her glasses from the bedside table. She made the terrible, terrible, very stupid, bad mistake of not changing out of Fareeha's clothes, and so, when she ran into Lena Oxton -- coming in from a late night, apparently — who narrowed her hazel eyes, then broke into a shit-eating grin, she knew she wouldn't be able to put this conversation off any longer.

Angela raised her hands.

"We are not having this discussion in the hallway."

Lena, still grinning, followed Angela to her room. Angela shut and locked the door behind them, then sunk onto her bed. She counted backwards in her head.

Three... two... one...

"You're *shaggin'* Fareeha Amari!"

Angela was aghast.

"Lena! I am doing no such thing!"

"Well, what the bloody hell are you doing coming from her room at the arse crack of dawn wearing her clothes? Paying a house visit?" Lena wagged her eyebrows, and Angela groaned, burying her head in her hands. "When? How? Congrats, love, she's one fit bird."

"Lena..." Angela didn't even know where to begin.

"How's she in the sack, huh? I bet she's a bloody good ride... she get you flying like an Egyptia — mmf!"

Bright red, and entertaining thoughts she most certainly should not be entertaining, Angela slapped a hand over Lena's mouth until the younger woman fell miraculously silent.

"First of all, you've thought about all of this?! And second of all, we're not sleeping together! I mean, well, we are, but not like that! We're not romantically involved!" Lena opened her mouth, and Angela hurriedly added, "Or s-sexually."

Good lord, Angela, you're a thirty-seven year old doctor, and you can't say sex without

stuttering?

“So... what, you have sleepovers? Paint each other’s nails? Gossip about boys?”

“Oh for — no, we just... Spend time together.”

Angela knew she was blushing.

“You fancy ‘er,” Lena said, pointing an accusatory finger at Angela. When she didn’t respond, Lena said again, louder, “You *fancy Fareeha Amari*. Bloody hell.”

When Angela didn’t say anything, Lena continued.

“You tell ‘er yet?”

Angela shook her head.

“Why not?”

Angela spluttered.

“We’re coworkers! And... she’s my patient! I don’t want to ruin what we have.”

“You’re barmy. Absolutely barmy. It’s pretty bloody obvious she fancies you, too.” Lena scrunched her face, thinking. “That’s why you’ve been chuffed to bits lately!”

“Lena, please. I beg of you, don’t say anything to anyone.”

Lena seemed to consider it.

“...Yeah,” she said after a pause, “F’reeha’s real private. I’ll belt up, don’t you worry love.” Lena stood. She patted Angela’s shoulder. “Chin up, Angie.” She made for the door. “I’ll leave you to it. But,” she said before flitting out the door, “I think you should tell her.”

Angela splayed out on her cot. Tell her. Right.

“Oh, hello Fareeha. I know we’ve been sleeping... next to each other... for months now, but I think I ‘fancy’ you. How would you like to go out to dinner sometime?” she asked her ceiling, then groaned. She flopped over onto her stomach. Not a chance.

They continued in that way for some time. It was becoming difficult for Angela to control or ignore the reactions of her body. It had been years since she had last been intimate with anyone, and seeing Fareeha in various states of undress; feeling her body and her skin against hers at night made it harder and harder.

Fareeha made it harder and harder.

She would do the sweetest things, cheering Angela up when she was upset; making her laugh with terrible puns and acute wit; carrying her to bed when she fell asleep; making sure she ate when her work and research consumed her. The more time their little family spent together, the more sides of Fareeha she saw. Hana looked up to her, not just for lessons in self-defense, but as a model of how to serve one’s country. Fareeha regarded Reinhardt with the eagerness and naïveté of a child meeting her hero, never failing to linger nearby, or find a seat when he launched into tales of the old days. She weathered Lena’s loquaciousness with the patience of a saint when she flitted around her in the hangar; earned Jack’s respect on the battlefield, and endeared herself to

the others with her composure and integrity. The only one other than Angela who was able to shake Fareeha's poise was, naturally, Aleksandra. Their banter, and the competitions Aleksandra invented were always a source of entertainment.

And, oh, the flirting. Angela supposed she deserved at least half of the blame; she started it half the time. Fareeha would wink at her, and her heart would march at double time. Sometimes, out of the blue, she would pin Angela with a gaze so intense she felt paralyzed, and say, "you're beautiful," or "you're incredible," or "what would I do without you?" Angela would flush, sometimes responding in kind, but more often than not, stuttering and stammering until Fareeha laughed and took pity on her.

Little did she know, their arrangement was just as challenging for Fareeha, for many of the same reasons.

Jesse was in the midst of passing a plate loaded with pancakes over to Hanzo for a team breakfast when Angela meandered into the common area, tying her hair back.

"Have any of you seen my glasses? I had them earlier..."

Without missing a beat, and while lifting her coffee to her lips, Fareeha said, "You left them on the desk in the medbay last night."

"Ah!" Angela's smile lit her face, "That's right! Thank you, Fareeha." She disappeared back down the corridor.

A moment passed. Fareeha felt eyes on her. She lifted her head, only to find Hana, Zaryanova, Oxtan, Zhou, and McCree staring at her. Hanzo averted his eyes.

Fareeha felt the temperature of the room rise and her ears heat.

"W-what?"

Jesse's mouth parted into a grin, and he turned back to the stove-top, whistling merrily. Lena broke into giggles, while Hana rolled her eyes and snorted. A smirking Aleks leaned into Fareeha, her eyebrows raised. She thumped Fareeha's back, almost sending her face-first into her eggs.

"Keeping track of the doctor's glasses for her, hm?" Aleks boomed.

Lena threw her head back, cackling.

"Glasses ain't the only thing Fareeha's keepin' track of," Jesse drawled, turning over the bacon and sausages on the griddle.

Lena hooted.

For the first and only time in her life, Fareeha desperately wished the Widowmaker would show up and put her out of her misery.

"That right? What else of Angie's d'you keep track of, Amari?" Lena said.

Fareeha struggled to keep her voice measured.

"I have no idea what you're talking about." Stiffly, she rose from the table and stormed out, barely giving Angela a glance when she passed her, glasses perched on her nose, in the corridor.

“Fareeha? Is everything all right?” Angela asked.

Fareeha paused.

“Yes.” She started down the hallway again, and Angela felt her heart sink. Fareeha hadn’t been so cold since the early days of the recall.

When she entered the common room to find a guilty-looking Lena, and Aleksandra on the receiving end of a cold glare from Mei-Ling, she felt nausea wash over her. Her brows knit together.

“Lena. A word?”

“Hold it, doc,” Jesse said, looking just as guilty as Lena. “Lena ain’t the only reason Amari walked outta here looking like she ate one of her own rockets.”

“Then why, may I ask, did I just see Fareeha walking out of here looking very upset?” Her voice was even and low, and even ever-boisterous Aleksandra seemed to become smaller.

“We were pokin’ a bit of fun. Went too far. I’ll be apologizing soon as I get the chance. It ain’t our place to be speculatin’ about your relationship.” A challenge came with the contrition.

Angela blanched, then reddened. Her blue eyes blazed.

“That’s right, Jesse. It isn’t.”

Her appetite gone, Angela followed in Fareeha’s footsteps, but not before hearing Jesse speak.

“Angie, wait!”

Angela tried in vain to find Fareeha after the standoff in the kitchen, but she was nowhere in the base. Thankfully, her Raptora suit was still in the hangar. Relieved that Fareeha hadn’t gone off to seek trouble, Angela resolved to wait and work until she returned. She hoped that Fareeha would visit her, but when 23:00 rolled around and she heard nary a whisper from the woman, she abandoned her lab coat and headed straight for Fareeha’s room.

She knocked once and waited, knowing that Fareeha was inside by the crack of light spilling from under the door. When moments passed and the door didn’t open, she knocked again, louder. She heard footsteps approach the door, retreat, then approach again. She held her breath. The door swung open, and there stood Fareeha, freshly showered, her hair still damp, in a sports bra and leggings, her arms crossed over her chest, looking down at Angela with her mouth pressed into a thin line.

Angela felt her mouth go dry, partially because she had never been on the receiving end of Fareeha’s displeasure, and partially because those leggings left nothing to the imagination, and Fareeha’s thighs looked chiseled from stone.

“Can I come in?” Angela said, her voice coming out more timid than she’d intended.

Something flickered in Fareeha’s eyes.

“I’m not sure that would be wise, Doctor Ziegler.”

Angela felt a rush of anger, then. She straightened, and met Fareeha’s dark brown eyes with flashing blue.

“We need to talk. Would you really like to do this in the hallway?”

When Angela was angry, her accent grew heavier. Fareeha, despite her better judgment, found it deeply attractive. She stepped to the side wordlessly, closing the door as Angela walked straight to the bed and sat as though she owned it. She crossed her legs at the knee, her beige skirt sliding up her thigh. Fareeha felt the back of her neck go hot.

“Jesse told me what happened this morning,” Angela started.

Fareeha couldn’t look her in the eye.

“He also told me that they owed you an apology.”

“They apologized,” Fareeha muttered.

An undercurrent of concern tempered the severity in Angela’s voice.

“Where did you go today? You weren’t in the base. I looked everywhere for you.”

“I needed to think. I went climbing. They had a gym nearby.” Fareeha stared at the wall.

“Well, at least it wasn’t a cliffside,” Angela muttered, remembering the time Fareeha and Lena, the former in one of her rare bouts of playfulness, had base-jumped into the Atlantic. Lena had taken the walkway back up, but Fareeha, accepting a challenge from Aleks, who apparently knew that one of Fareeha’s hobbies was free-climbing — Angela was still somewhat envious that Aleks knew that and she did not — had scaled the cliff with all the ease of a mountain ram. She had lifted herself over the cliff ledge and collapsed on her back at a harried Angela’s feet, triumphant and cocksure.

She’d gotten an earful, of course, but Angela would never be able to forget the fierce happiness radiating from Fareeha. Later, when they were been passing through France, Angela caught Fareeha sneaking away to climb the boulders of Fontainebleau, only to follow her out. Watching her, she realized that Fareeha derived more joy from the act of climbing than beating Aleksandra’s challenge.

That did get a smile from Fareeha, and when she looked at Angela, instead of the wall, her entire bearing softened.

“You worry too much for me,” she said at last.

“Do you want me to stop?” Angela said softly.

Fareeha wrestled with herself before giving a quick shake of her head.

“...No. I am not accustomed to being worried for.”

“Good. I wasn’t planning to.”

Their eyes met and Angela felt a miniature sun combust in the space beneath her chest.

“Angela...”

“Come here, Schatz.”

Fareeha obliged, sitting next to Angela on the bed.

“I know what that means, you know. I asked Reinhardt. Why do you call me that?”

Angela's cheeks darkened with a blush. It was her turn to admire Fareeha's walls.

"Winston has asked me to go on an assignment to the Medical University of Vienna. He has asked me to do it alone, while the team remains on contract here. It isn't dangerous," Angela cut off, as soon as Fareeha's face darkened and her mouth opened to protest. "It's a series of lectures. Something of a PR campaign, as he described it. To rebuild Overwatch's good name."

"I see."

"Fareeha," Angela said, leaning her head on Fareeha's taut bicep. "About what happened this morning..." She wormed her arm around Fareeha's, lacing their fingers together. Angela felt her insides soar when she met no resistance. "Do you want this to stop?"

Fareeha breathed deep. She unlaced their fingers and moved away. Angela squinted her eyes shut, feeling tightness welling in her throat.

How could she have been so *stupid*? To imagine that Fareeha might enjoy their arrangement as much as she did; to fool herself into thinking that this was anything but a kindness on Fareeha's part.

She didn't feel the bed dip behind her. She did feel Fareeha's legs on either side of her, and Fareeha's still-bare arms coming around her shoulders to wrap around her chest.

Her eyes shot open when she felt Fareeha's chin rest on her left shoulder, warm puffs of her breath on her neck.

"Never," Fareeha said, her voice just above a whisper, somehow sending shockwaves through Angela.

She leaned back into Fareeha, closing her eyes and letting her hands lie on those dark forearms.

"I'm glad." She meant it with every fiber of her body.

"When do you leave?" Fareeha asked.

"Tomorrow."

The arms around her tightened.

"Stay with me tonight."

Angela's insides calmed, her happiness the steady rush of the ocean.

"I was counting on it, Schatz."

The smile and the very briefest of kisses on her cheek told Angela that this feeling, this *affection*, was worth every broken protocol and every reprimand.

Sleep Sound 6

Chapter Summary

Pharah and Mercy have trouble sleeping. A series of chance encounters prove that the solution might be each other.

Chapter Notes

A double update for you <3. Originally posted on 7/16/2016:
<http://viceterships.tumblr.com/post/148022191879/sleep-sound-6>

Thank you for reading!

Synopsis: Pharah and Mercy have trouble sleeping. A series of chance encounters prove that the solution might be each other.

Pairing: Rocket Angel (Fareeha “Pharah” Amari/Angela “Mercy” Ziegler)

No matter how many times she let Zaryanova beat her into the ground, Fareeha couldn't fall asleep. She lay in her bunk, eyes adjusting to catch the edges of shapes in the low light. She laced her fingers together on her stomach, twiddling them. She thought of her rocket launcher, and how, with Torbjorn's help, she might be able to expand the magazine, or reduce recoil. She thought of Angela. She moved her hands beneath her head. Silver light streamed through the windows, landing on the bulge of her feet beneath the off-white sheets. Her foot twitched. The moonlight rippled over the fabric like a rolling wave. She thought of her suit, how one of the frontal plates was loose and would need to be welded tighter. She tilted her head to catch the wink of the stars through her open window. They glowed in a cluster; she counted four. She thought of Angela.

Fareeha turned over to her side, body warm. She shifted the sheets to her waist. She studied the crescent of the moon, waxing. Wondered if Winston would tell her about it. Wondered if she should ask.

She thought of Angela. Angela, who would fill the empty space on her left side, always her left side. Angela, who sometimes slept with her mouth open and drooled on the pillow.

She felt her heartbeat pick up. Idly, she wondered if her resting heart rate had changed since her time with Helix Security. Had it finally dipped below 50? She thought it might. Life with Overwatch was far more exciting than life with HSI. She was in better shape than she had been in the army, and that was saying something. She would have to get Angela to monitor it; perhaps once or twice a day.

No, that would be too much. Angela had her work to tend to. She would manage. Perhaps enlist Zaryanova....

Except, Angela would be happy to do it. She remembered the way Angela had lit up when

Fareeha came to a check up and volunteered the information that “high blood pressure runs through the family, did my mother ever mention that?” and her vaccines “might, possibly, be out of date.” She remembered Angela’s initial indignation, and then how the doctor would say, with a small, satisfied smile, that Fareeha’s blood pressure was “Excellent. Perfect, actually,” at her next examination. How, irrationally, she’d filled with pride and perhaps even exaggerated the flex of her muscles when she pulled on her shirt, knowing that Angela’s eyes were on her.

Fareeha rolled onto her stomach, burying her face in her pillows. Plural. That had changed too. Accustomed to the military lifestyle, Fareeha only ever slept with a single pillow, and could make do without. She’d added the second to her bed when Angela, in one of her rare moods, had snapped, “Fareeha, can’t you get another pillow? All this stoic soldier nonsense makes my neck ache.”

The next time they slept in her bed, another pillow had appeared. Stripes of pink blossomed on Angela’s cheeks, as they did whenever she was embarrassed.

“You didn’t actually have to do that, you know,” she’d managed, though her lips fought down a smile.

Fareeha smirked.

“I thought all that stoic soldier nonsense made your neck ache?”

Angela had pinched her arm then, but when they turned the lights off, she turned into Fareeha’s body, nuzzling into the curve of her neck.

“Mmm. The second pillow is much better. Thank you, Fareeha.”

Flipping onto her back and unintentionally wrapping her blankets snugly around her legs, Fareeha pushed her palms into her eyes.

She started to breathe the way Zenyatta had taught her, emptying her mind, centering herself on the sensations of her body, her blood.

She thought of Angela.

Fareeha groaned and sat up. She kicked off the sheets and made for the hangar. If she couldn’t sleep, she’d at least do something productive.

For the third consecutive night, Doctor Angela Ziegler toyed with the idea of shutting off her nanomites to take a zolpidem or two and finally be able to sleep. It was an idle thought, to be sure, but with the popcorn ceiling of this Vienna hotel taunting her, more and more appealing by the hour. Her mind wandered to the team. Winston’s brief video message this morning assured her that everything was going smoothly, and that any injuries as a result of overenthusiastic training — most likely referring to Fareeha and Aleks, Angela thought with a rueful shake of her head — were easily attended to by the team’s first-aid knowledge.

She wished Fareeha had been the one to deliver the message.

Angela lingered on memories of Fareeha, her touch, her smell, her voice — the image of her, whether in her Raptora suit, or civilian clothing, or the sports bras and compression shorts she wore to train, sending tingles through her body. Once, Fareeha had walked into the gym at midday — Angela’s usual workout time, and very carefully scheduled so as to avoid this exact problem — her eyes falling on Angela as she sat at the incline bench and pushed through a set. She had already been red, and was becoming redder by the second, Fareeha continuing to stare.

When she racked the bar, the sound jolted Fareeha out of her examination, and Angela managed to come up with something witty.

Unfortunately, her something witty was, “Something wrong with my form, Captain Amari?”

Fareeha’s eyebrows rose.

“Not at all, Doctor Ziegler. In fact, I was just admiring your musculature.”

Angela had laughed easily at that, the sound dying in her throat when she watched Fareeha, in those damnable black compression shorts that she loved so much and hated in the same breath, rack the squat bar, stretch briefly, then squat, her ass breaking parallel, her thighs dimpling with the movement, her pelvis snapping forward at the top of the exercise.

“Something wrong with my form, Doctor Ziegler?” Fareeha had asked, at the end of her warm-up.

“N-no,” was all Angela had been able to manage before skittering over to a different machine facing the opposite direction to avoid devouring Fareeha with her eyes.

But, oh, how difficult it was, when Fareeha, in private, knowing how Angela enjoyed being carried, would pick her up as soon as they were alone and walk her, either to the couch, or the bed, or sometimes even her computer, Angela giggling the whole way. Or, when dear, sweet Fareeha, far too unaware of her attractiveness, would strip off her shirts, or her pants, in the casual manner of people who are used to being around others in their smallclothes, and bustle about for a while before settling in to bed, still only half-dressed. What a blessing.

...What a damned curse, not being able to touch her, except with the most cursory, most innocent of touches. What sweet torture, to have Fareeha’s breath against her neck or ear, and be unable to kiss her.

One time she’d slipped, slightly tipsy, and traced the black ink on Fareeha’s arm, outlining the shapes and the images with questing fingers. She stopped at the dip of a deep scar, tracing gently around it until Fareeha jolted her arm away.

“Angela?” Came the sleepy rumble.

“Sorry, Schatz. Go back to sleep.”

“Hm. Y’mar,” Fareeha mumbled, dozing against Angela’s shoulder.

She realized how unwise it was to be drunk and alone around Fareeha when, sober, her control was already strained to its limits. The only time she had slipped after that was when she had passed out, and instead of carrying her to her room, Fareeha, who had been inebriated herself, brought Angela to hers.

The morning after, Angela had cursed herself and hoped she hadn’t done anything stupid, only to have the guilt and worry washed away by a cranky, hungover Fareeha waking up, stomping over to the window, and pulling the shades shut before diving face first back into the bed. Angela dissolved into a bout of giggles, only for Fareeha to lift her head and glare. She sat up, pat Fareeha’s head, and gently pushed her back down. When Angela’s cool hands began to knead at her neck and shoulders, Fareeha groaned, pleased.

“I’m sure you’ve heard it before, but you’re an angel,” Fareeha had said into her pillow.

“One that likes compliments,” Angela responded. Fareeha showered her in them until she finally

begged for the Egyptian to stop lest her head become too big for doorways.

Angela rose from the hotel bed, pulled on a robe, and fixed a cup of Chamomile. She opened the shades to the balcony, curling up in an armchair facing the glass. She cupped her hands around the mug and blew, sending ripples across the surface of the liquid.

If she were being honest with herself, and objective, what Lena and the team had picked up on between her and Fareeha was not exactly difficult to see. When they weren't working or on duty, they gravitated to each other. At the end of a workday, Fareeha would stop by the medbay, glass of water in her hands, and drop it on the edge of Angela's desk, then sit and wait until she finished. Sometimes, they would linger in silence, basking in the other's company; sometimes she would talk, inquiring after Fareeha's day only to be politely deflected into talking about her own. Or, she would go in search of the woman, usually finding her in the hangar or in the gym. At the latter she did not disturb her, but in the hangar, Angela would roll up a stool and watch, chin-in-palm, as Fareeha maintained her suit, or her weaponry. Some days, Fareeha, in a good mood with oil stains on her hands and face, would narrate what she was doing for Angela's benefit. Others, she would work on in silence to finish whatever she was doing before gracing Angela with the small smile she had grown to love. They would walk to lunch or dinner together, arms brushing.

Angela appreciated the silences Fareeha brought with her. She was too weary now to fill awkward spaces with idle chatter, and Fareeha seemed to understand. Even when the team congregated, Angela could find Fareeha across the room, or right next to her, and know that those dark eyes would be there — a balm to her anxieties.

And, if she were being honest with herself, and objective, Fareeha's attraction to her, and vice versa, was obvious. Fareeha stared. Often. Both unintentionally and not. If it had been anyone else, Angela might have been put off, but the nature of Fareeha's regard for her felt the same as it did when they flew together on the battlefield — uplifting. Safe. Warm. Fareeha couldn't hide her intensity if she tried. It was flattering, quite frankly, and Angela wasn't sure what she would do if the intensity of that stare ever fell on anyone else.

Because, despite all her stoicism, Fareeha was a thoroughly captivating and charming woman. When they hit the town for nights out, she drew the attention of men and women alike, though few had the gumption to approach the tall former-soldier. If they did, she turned them away with gentleness and grace.

Angela sighed.

It meant something, didn't it, that Fareeha's eyes glimmered whenever she delivered a line that knocked Angela off her feet?

Like their last mission together when, after Mercy had called out for help, Pharah appeared, hovering above her, a toothy smirk visible beneath her visor; a dangerous lilt in her voice, saying, "Did someone call for air support?"

Or when she'd worn that crimson blouse two weeks ago, and Fareeha's eyes flashed as she said, within earshot of the entire team no less, "You look good in red, Angela."

Lena had teased her about that one for days.

And the night before she'd left — she could still feel the brush of Fareeha's lips against her cheek.

"Well, Ziegler," she said to the empty air, "if you don't take a risk sometime, you'll end up a spinster in a house full of cats."

At 22:30 the next day, fresh from a shower and in a bathrobe and nightgown cross-legged on her bed, Angela pulled her holopad close and opened the video program. She hovered over Fareeha's name for a good minute before tapping it and initiating the call. Her own face appeared in the upper right of the screen and, after a cursory examination, she tucked a stray lock of hair behind her ear.

Fareeha's face appeared on the screen after the third ring; Angela couldn't stop the silly grin that formed over her face.

"Angela! Hello. Are you okay?" Fareeha smiled, but there were circles beneath her eyes.

"Ja, ja. Everything's fine. I just — *Missed you.* " — Wanted to call you."

"Well, here I am."

"Is that a new bruise I see?" Angela chided.

Fareeha's rich laugh touched her from across the airwaves.

"Here I was hoping you wouldn't notice."

Angela mock-glared.

"Please tell me that isn't from Aleks. I'll be very upset with her when I return."

"You'll have to be upset with me as well; she has a few of her own." Fareeha's eyes brimmed with warmth.

"Whatever shall I do with the two of you?" Angela asked ruefully.

"Tie us up until we promise to behave?"

Angela felt the heat rise to her face.

Still, she managed to say, "You know, I just might!"

Oh, that laugh was delectable to her ears.

"I shall have something to look forward to, then."

Angela swallowed the sudden lump that formed in her throat. On the screen, Fareeha seemed to realize what she had said and covered her mouth with a hand, brown eyes wide.

Of course she didn't have sleeves on. She must have come back from the gym, if the ponytail and the towel over her shoulder were any indication.

"Fareeha..." Angela was not proud of the raw longing in her voice, "I miss you."

Fareeha seemed to recover from her mortification.

"I miss you too, Angela."

"When I get back —"

"When you get back —" Fareeha said simultaneously. They both laughed. Fareeha took a deep breath, then continued, "When you get back, I have something I want to tell you."

“I was about to say the same thing.”

“Then I will await your return with bated breath, Doctor Ziegler.”

Angela touched two fingers to the surface of the holopad, where Fareeha’s cheek was.

“Please be careful, Fareeha.”

“I will. You should get some rest.”

Angela shook her head.

“I don’t sleep well here. Without you.”

Fareeha blinked, surprised.

“The feeling is mutual.” On the screen, she licked her lips. “Try, for me.”

“I’ll try, Schatz.”

“Sweet dreams, Angela.”

“Good night, Fareeha.”

Sleep Sound 7

Chapter Summary

Pharah and Mercy have trouble sleeping. A series of chance encounters prove that the solution might be each other.

Chapter Notes

This is the final chapter of Sleep Sound. That said, I could be persuaded to write an epilogue and maybe a sequel.

Thank you for sticking with me!

Originally posted: <http://viceterships.tumblr.com/post/149207205729/sleep-sound-7>

Synopsis: Pharah and Mercy have trouble sleeping. A series of chance encounters prove that the solution might be each other.

Pairing: Rocket Angel (Fareeha “Pharah” Amari/Angela “Mercy” Ziegler)

The harried businessman in the seat next to Angela muttered a gruff apology when his knee knocked against hers as he tried to settle into the cramped seat. Angela offered a thin-lipped smile, returning her attention to the message from Fareeha.

See you in a few hours, Angela. Have a safe flight.

Thank you, Schatz, she responded. Her thumbs paused over the keyboard. She worried at her lip, then typed. *I’m excited to see you :)*

As am I. And everyone else, as well.

Angela’s phone buzzed with a message from a different sender. She tapped Hana’s photo.

She’s lying, the message read. *She’s the only one who misses you. You can stay in Vienna. I finished two cases of Dew and three of Red Bull while you were away. It was great!*

Hana’s text ended with an emoji of her trademark pink bunny, its inclusion in the collection of tiny images a testament to the young woman’s popularity. Angela shook her head.

I swear, Hana... she wrote back.

The response Angela received was a selfie consisting of Hana sticking her tongue out and Fareeha in the background looking put-upon.

Oh how she missed them.

There was a different quality to Overwatch now. She felt less like an asset and more like a person. She hadn't understood Winston's old affection for the organization back then — they'd been so large, involved in so much, and so violent... She'd had moments of familial affection, for gruff Torbjörn whose willingness to collaborate on technologies that healed rather than harmed endeared him to her even now; for ever-kind Reinhardt who seemed a Don Quixote but embodied true heroism; for Lena and Winston and Genji, and that fine young officer from Southeast Asia who'd fought tooth and nail against any operation that demanded death and violence — but nothing like this. Nothing like the pride that bubbled up when she saw Hana Song's face, bright and eager; passionate though she feigned nonchalance. Nothing like the quiet comfort of Jesse McCree's hand on her shoulder, tapping shots of whiskey together. Nothing like Fareeha Amari, whose every expression captivated Angela; whose dedication to being a protector fueled her own passion to heal; whose personal tragedy had been set aside to live a life of service.

She hadn't realized that she'd been staring at her phone, tracing the curve of Fareeha's face with her nail until the businessman next to her cleared his throat and said, "Your family is quite lovely. My husband and I, we adopted twelve years ago and it was the best decision of our lives."

"Oh, we, I, we aren't — I..." Angela stammered, then blinked. Why should she deny it? They were, weren't they? They were family. They'd adopted each other; chosen this life.

Why should she deny it?

"Thank you." With the practiced ease of a woman accustomed to navigating social spaces primarily occupied by men, Angela deflected. "Do you have a photo? Of your family?"

Eagerly, the graying man showed her the background of his phone. His balding husband grinned into the camera, their daughter sandwiched between them. Sitting at her feet, a mutt that looked to be of Labrador and Boxer descent lolled, tongue hanging from its mouth.

They were beautiful. Angela said as much.

When they landed, Angela bade him farewell, taking his business card, and added him and his family to the mental list of reasons she continued to fight before turning to the airport exit and setting off briskly.

Her family was waiting for her.

"You would think I'd been gone for a year rather than a week!" Angela said, laughing and stumbling as Lena, her choral accelerator covered by an oversized sweatshirt, clung to her neck.

"Oh, Angie, thank god you're back. D'you have any idea what it's like patching up two knuckleheads who insist on bleedin' everywhere?" She thrust an arm into the air, waving frantically for emphasis. "Well, I reckon you do, but I'm not cut out for this, no way, no how. The blood's fine, I suppose, but the scabbin' and the pus..." She shuddered. "Either way, you're back now, so I don't have to deal with it. Ha!"

Angela caught Fareeha's eye noticing, now that she could see the woman up close and in person, a split on her lip that was on the mend and old bandages around a swollen-looking left hand. Confirming her suspicions and Lena's complaints, Fareeha looked away, adjusting her grip on the compact suitcase in tow.

Hana meandered back from the vending machine then, already halfway done with a bottle of Mountain Dew, and Angela gave a heavy sigh.

“Enjoy it while you can, Hana, Liebe. I am in charge of groceries this week.”

“Fuckdamn,” Hana said, even as she neared Angela, unable to suppress her mirth.

“Come here darling, I missed you and your terrible eating and sleeping habits.” Angela enfolded the younger woman in her arms, squeezing tight. Hana reciprocated, letting Angela linger longer than she normally might have.

“Yeah, yeah.” Hana pulled away, Angela’s hands resting on her shoulders.

“No injuries? You haven’t been training too hard, have you? Unlike certain others I could mention?” Out of the corner of her eye, Angela caught the barest twitch of Fareeha’s lips.

“Are you kidding? If Cap coulda stuffed me in a suit made of bubble wrap this week, she would have. Wouldn’t even let me and Lúcio go to the movies on Wednesday!”

Fareeha shook her head, pinching the bridge of her nose. There had been a valid, mission-related reason for that, not that it was appropriate to discuss here.

Angela released Hana, passing her garment bag to Lena, who watched her approach Fareeha with something like the anticipation of a football fan before a penalty kick.

“Fareeha,” Angela said as she seized the wrist of Fareeha’s left arm, inspecting the loose bandages with a shake of her head. She lifted her chin, reaching for the healing cut on Fareeha’s lip, fingers trailing across her spreading smile. Angela heard Hana’s huff somewhere behind her, but with the way Fareeha looked at her, the affection in her eyes threatening to make Angela’s chest burst --

God, she’d never felt like this about anyone, anyone.

In one rapid, fluid motion, and to Angela’s utter surprise, strong arms swept her into their embrace, her feet dangling above the ground as Fareeha lifted her up and held her tight. Her laugh rang loud in her own ears, and she set her hands on those broad shoulders, resisting the urge to kiss this beautiful woman who felt more like home than any apartment or base. When Fareeha let her down, gently, Angela linked her arms around Fareeha’s neck, sighing happily into her collarbone.

“How I’ve missed you, Schatzli.”

She felt Fareeha’s injured hand, less dexterous thanks to bandages and swelling, settle at the small of her back.

“And I you, Angela.”

Reluctantly, they pulled away, Angela tucking away all the other things she wanted to say and do, saving them for a more appropriate moment.

“Finally. Let’s get going already! Big pink’s passed out in the medbay with broken ribs and two goose eggs courtesy of Casanova over there, and I’m pretty sure the Snap Lucio just sent me was of your staff frozen solid.”

“What!?” Angela whirled around, her face schooled into a picture of horror. Hana snapped a photo, then doubled over in laughter.

“That is not true; do not listen to her Angela!” Fareeha said, glaring at the MEKA pilot.

“Aww yeah, that was perfect.” Hana flashed the picture to Lena, who sniggered at the expressions

on Angela and Fareeha's faces, then zipped forward. "Definitely one for the O-dub gag reel. Once I finally get clearance to stream." She shot a stink-eye at Fareeha, who just rolled her eyes.

"Not my call, Song. Take it up with the boss."

"Yeah, whatever. I still don't get why you won't let me rig your visor up with a cam. The people love you! You've got to give them some service!"

Hana and Fareeha walked side-by-side out of baggage claim, arguing quietly enough that, a few feet behind them, Angela and Lena could only make out snippets of their conversation.

"Like two peas in a pod, aren't they?" Lena asked, threading her arm through Angela's after returning her garment bag. Fareeha wheeled her suitcase, not at all noticing the weight of it. "Surprised the hell out o' me that they get on so well, really. Considering the time I had tryin' to cozy up to the Cap."

"I would not consider 120 questions while she works in the hangar 'cozying up,' my dear."

"Sue me for being curious."

Angela leaned in close.

"I think it has something to do with being encased in metal all day. I have a working theory it has a detrimental impact on the brain."

Fareeha and Hana snapped their heads around simultaneously, eyes narrowed at Angela.

"I heard that," they both said, and Angela motioned at them, palm up.

"Case in point."

Lena guffawed, earning another glare from the mech pilots. She and Hana climbed into the backseat of the communal team car -- a decade-old Jeep that, in a pinch, could double as an ATV -- while Fareeha loaded Angela's baggage into the back.

"Here, let me," she said, reaching for the garment bag slung over the doctor's shoulder. Angela handed it over, meeting Fareeha's eyes and smiling when their fingers touched.

"Thank you, Captain," she said, playfully bumping Fareeha's hip with her own. "Will you open the door for me as well?"

"Now that you mention it..." Fareeha swung around the passenger side, doing so.

"You are as always, too kind, Captain."

"It's always a pleasure, Doctor Ziegler."

"Oh. My. God." Hana interrupted from the backseat. "Get a fuckin' room!"

When the Jeep rumbled to a start, Angela stole a glance at Fareeha, pleased that her ears were a shade of red. Lena bent over the console almost immediately, flicking through stations before landing on a vintage rock station, playing songs from the turn of the millennium, almost a century ago, and singing loudly and off-key while Hana's face scrunched into disgust.

"This is old people music!" She groused.

Angela caught Fareeha's tiny smile, then leaned back in her seat. It was good to be home.

Angela spent the remainder of the afternoon debriefing on the Vienna dispatch to Winston and Jack. The lectures had been more popular than expected, and they spent over an hour discussing the implications of such a turnout. Angela had endured many a post-lecture cocktail hour dodging questions about the rumors of Overwatch's resurgence, to say nothing of the inquiries about her involvement with the organization prior to the ratification of the Petras Act. After they'd exhausted the conversation, Winston, on his way past, thanked her.

"You really are something else, Angela. The base hasn't been the same without you," he said, adjusting his glasses.

"Oh Winston, you are too sweet, as always."

"Oh no, it's true. There are certain individuals who become quite restless when you're away. Thank you again, Angela. I'll work with Athena, Lúcio, and Hana to collect some data points on the reaction to your lectures. Don't tell them I said this," Winston said, leaning in conspiratorially, "but those two are savants when it comes to matters of public opinion. I think Athena's even learned a few new data mining algorithms from them."

"I resent that, Winston. Their techniques are far from methodical," the AI chimed.

"But effective, wouldn't you say?"

"There is some merit, yes."

Winston chuckled, patting Angela shoulder with one great hand. He ambled from the debriefing room, leaving Angela with 76. He unlatched his mask, revealing his scarred face. It served the dual purpose of setting Angela at ease and indicating that this was a conversation off the record.

"Sorry for sending you out there alone, Ange. I know you hate the — how did you put it — 'farce of academia,'" Jack said, leaning against the side of the circular table. "Thought it was a good idea while we had a spell of quiet to push into the softer side of things."

Angela's answering smile was wan and weak, but a smile nonetheless.

"I understand why it has to be done. Although..." she thought back to Fareeha's conversation with Hana from that morning, about clearance to stream, "sooner or later, you will have to make a decision about what all of this is going to be." She looked around the room, at the marked maps, both physical and virtual, one palm flat on the burnished steel of the table, laser-cut with the outlines of the Overwatch logo. Jack's mouth morphed into a shape that intimated displeasure.

"We'll see about that."

Angela didn't know what to make of that response, so she remained silent.

Jack's gaze swept over to her, one edge of his mouth curling upwards.

"Next time, I'll be sure to send Amari with you."

His smile, minute as it was, widened as Angela stiffened, stuffing her hands into her pockets.

"That is unnecessary, Jack; I don't need a bodyguard. I am more than capable of taking care of myself at an academic conference."

"I didn't mean as a bodyguard," he said, and Angela could hear some of her old Commander's

dry humor, “I meant as an escort. To share the load. You’d get a lot less questions with Amari within earshot.”

“Are you trying to say something, Jack?” Angela asked sharply.

Jack straightened.

“If I were, it wouldn’t be a reprimand.” He latched on his mask. “Dismissed, Mercy. You’ve got the day off tomorrow once you’re done patching everyone up. Mission here’s done in 6 days. We’re getting briefed on the next one in 4. Get the details from Pharah and Reinhardt.”

“Yes, Strike Commander.”

Soldier: 76 flinched.

“I’d prefer anything but that, Mercy.”

Angela was early. She knew it, but she’d spent the past hour and a half pacing in her quarters, adjusting knick-knacks and re-alphabetizing her virtual library, and truly, it was only a few minutes — Fareeha wouldn’t mind, would she?

Angela pivoted on her heel, ducking into the closet room, which happened to be a supply closet. Unpacking had taken less than twenty minutes; nomad that she was, Angela had long since developed efficient routines around traveling. In a pinch, she could be ready for a month-long mission in under a quarter of an hour. She braced herself against the closet door, wringing her hands and considering her more immediate quandary.

What if Fareeha did mind? What if she’d reconsidered their arrangement in the past week? What if —

She took a deep breath.

“*Do you want this to stop?*” She’d asked.

She recalled the timbre of Fareeha’s voice, with the same steadfast certainty as the heart of a mountain.

“*Never.*”

She cracked the closet door open, determining that the coast was clear before emerging and continuing down the hallway to her destination. She heard soft music playing within Fareeha’s quarters, coupled with the low crooning of a man’s voice in Arabic. She caught strains of Fareeha’s voice, rising with the crescendo of the song, and her mouth parted into a smile. She lingered behind the door, enjoying the muffled ring of Fareeha’s singing for seconds more before rapping on the door.

“Just a moment!”

The music clicked off, then the soft white light spilled around Fareeha’s form in the doorway, her fine eyebrows rising as she examined her guest.

“Angela,” she said, moving aside immediately.

Angela grinned, stepping past Fareeha. They stood a few feet apart, shoulders squared. Angela admired the woman standing before her, from her bare feet to the dark jeans slung low on her

hips, up past the sleeveless hoodie she was wearing to the smirk and the tattoo that adorned her face, losing herself in warm brown eyes.

“I hope you don’t mind,” Angela said, taking a step forward, her hand hovering over Fareeha’s collarbone, “me stopping by.”

“I do mind,” Fareeha answered, “if you are only stopping by. Though, by the way you’re dressed,” she was referring to the yoga pants and faded sweatshirt Angela had thrown on after her debrief with Winston and Jack, “I don’t think ‘stopping by’ was your intention.”

As usual, her smug confidence and total accuracy stirred combined feelings of excitement and exasperation in Angela’s chest.

“No,” Angela agreed. “I had every intention of enticing you to let me stay.” Fareeha’s smirk broadened. She couldn’t have that. She turned away abruptly from Fareeha, sitting on the edge of her cot and patting the pillow she’d convinced the Egyptian to add. “If only because I have missed my pillow a great deal.” Fareeha’s expression wavered, sinking.

“I see how it is. And here I was about to offer you access to my wardrobe for the night. You’ll be very warm in that.” She motioned to Angela’s outfit.

“Ah, I knew there was another reason I came! Your wardrobe is remarkably comfortable.”

This time, Fareeha did actually pout, and Angela took pity.

“Oh mein Schatz, come here.” She held her arms outstretched, and though she shook her head, Fareeha accepted the embrace, bending over and hugging Angela briefly.

“Make yourself comfortable, Angela. I’m going to get ready.”

When Fareeha returned from the ensuite, she set aside the golden ornaments that adorned her hair next to Angela’s glasses on the bedside table. She flicked the lights off, leaving only the dim lamp burning on the bedside table. Angela had changed into a pair of boxer shorts and one of Fareeha’s many HSI tanktops, the garments she’d arrived in folded and lying on the couch. She was already under the covers, cheek propped in her hand. She lifted the edge of the covers and Fareeha slipped in beside her, turning off the lamp and leaving them both illuminated by the moon and the stars.

Angela scooted closer, eyes bright, until their thighs brushed. Fareeha reached out, her fingertips touching Angela’s hipbones. Angela’s soft smile provided further encouragement, and Fareeha curled her arm around Angela’s waist. Angela sighed, snuggling into Fareeha’s embrace; tucking her head beneath Fareeha’s chin. She listened to the thump of Fareeha’s heart; reveling in the warmth of her skin, the faint scent of metal and fuel beneath a snap of spice and citrus; her chest contracting and expanding with quiet breaths. She felt lips press against the top of her head; heard a rumble in Arabic that she did not understand.

“Fareeha,” Angela murmured as the first tendrils of sleep threatened to make a coward of her.

“Hmm?” came the response, drowsy. She shifted, not surprised to see Fareeha’s eyes already closed. Of their own accord, her fingers drifted across the smooth skin of her face, traversing the lines of Fareeha’s jaw; the arc of her cheekbones; the lines of her tattoo. She lingered there, tracing the curved tail of the Udjat, then the teardrop, smiling harder when Fareeha’s face scrunched and her nose wiggled. She did that a lot when Fareeha was around, Angela found — smiled hard enough that her cheeks ached.

“Fareeha, what are we?”

The question slipped out of Angela's mouth before she had the opportunity to think twice — or think at all. In front of her, brown eyes opened, and she found herself pinned in place, frozen by the intensity there. She made no attempt to backpedal.

There was no room in the currents between them for anything except the burden and lightness of absolute honesty.

“What do you want to be?” Fareeha asked, and Angela could feel, could see Pharah's strength, Pharah's integrity in the lines of her mouth, in the weight of her gaze.

Angela felt the thrums of life beneath her hand, the subtle shifting of Fareeha's features; her warmth. The answer came easily.

“More.”

Fareeha's pupils dilated; her exhale tickled Angela's face.

“I would not be opposed.”

Angela's fingers drifted to Fareeha's neck, to her fluttering pulse point, then beneath the collar of her top to press her palm to the skin above her heart.

“And if I want everything?” Angela said, her voice just above a whisper.

Fareeha's hand covered hers. She leaned in, slowly, aching slowly. Angela's eyes fell shut. Their lips met, briefly, so briefly, too briefly, and for one euphoric moment, Angela was complete.

Fareeha pulled away, her voice hitching, her heart pounding beneath Angela's palm.

“It's yours.”

FIN

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